

What is claimed:

3 1. A method for managing a computerized valet parking system, the method comprising the steps of:

linking pre-parking digital images of a vehicle to a first set of valet parking data in an electronic database, the pre-parking digital images documenting a physical condition of the vehicle when the vehicle is parked by a first valet attendant;

retrieving the pre-parking digital images from the electronic database based on the first set of valet parking data; and

determining whether damage occurred to the vehicle before the first valet attendant parked the vehicle based on the pre-parking digital images.

4 2. ³ The method of claim *1* further including the steps of:

collecting the first set of valet parking data from the first valet attendant;

collecting the pre-parking digital images from a plurality of digital cameras; and

storing the first set of valet parking data and the pre-parking digital images to the electronic database.

5 3. ⁴ The method of claim *2* further including the step of collecting a valet attendant identifier from the first valet attendant.

6 4. The method of claim ~~3~~ further including the step of reading electronic indicia encoded on an employee badge of the first valet attendant, the electronic indicia associating the first valet attendant with a unique identifier.

7 5. The method of claim ~~2~~ further including the step of collecting a valet ticket identifier from the first valet attendant.

8 6. The method of claim ~~5~~ further including the step of scanning electronic indicia printed on a valet ticket, the electronic indicia associating the valet ticket with a unique identifier.

9 7. The method of claim ~~7~~ further including the step of:
collecting a first pre-parking digital image of a front left region of the vehicle;
collecting a second pre-parking digital image of a front right region of the vehicle;
collecting a third pre-parking digital image of a rear right region of the vehicle; and
collecting a fourth pre-parking digital image of a rear left region of the vehicle.

10 8. The method of claim ~~8~~ further including the steps of:
verifying a validity of the first set of valet parking data; and
enabling entry of the vehicle into a parking area upon verification of the validity of the first set of valet parking data.

11 ¹⁰ ~~10~~. The method of claim ~~8~~ further including the step of verifying a validity of a valet attendant identifier.

12 ¹⁰ ~~10~~. The method of claim ~~8~~ further including the step of verifying a validity of a valet ticket identifier.

13 ³ ~~11~~. The method of claim ~~11~~ further including the steps of:

receiving a database query, the database query including the first set of valet parking data; and

searching the electronic database for the first set of valet parking data in accordance with the database query.

14 ¹³ ~~12~~. The method of claim ~~11~~ further including the step of searching the electronic database for a first valet attendant identifier.

15 ¹³ ~~12~~. The method of claim ~~11~~ further including the step of searching the electronic database for a valet ticket identifier.

16 ³ ~~14~~. The method of claim ~~11~~ further including the step of locating vehicle damage in the pre-parking digital images.

17 15. ³ The method of claim 1 further including the steps of:

linking post-parking digital images of the vehicle to a second set of valet parking data in an electronic database, the post-parking digital images documenting a physical condition of the vehicle when the vehicle is retrieved by a second valet attendant;

retrieving the post-parking digital images from the electronic database based on the second set of valet parking data; and

determining whether damage occurred to the vehicle after the second valet retrieved the vehicle based on the post-parking digital images.

18 16. A method for linking digital images of a vehicle to a set of valet parking data, the method comprising the steps of:

collecting the valet parking data from a valet attendant;
collecting the digital images from a plurality of digital cameras, the images documenting a physical condition of the vehicle when the vehicle is operated by the valet attendant; and
storing the valet parking data and the digital images to an electronic database.

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19 17. The method of claim 16 further including the step of collecting a valet attendant identifier from the valet attendant.

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20 18. The method of claim 17 further including the step of reading electronic indicia encoded on an employee badge of the valet attendant, the electronic indicia associating the valet attendant with a unique identifier.

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21 19. The method of claim 17 further including the step of receiving a radio frequency (RF) signal from an employee badge of the valet attendant, the RF signal associating the valet attendant with a unique identifier.

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22 20. The method of claim 16 further including the step of collecting a valet ticket identifier from the valet attendant.

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23 21. The method of claim 17 further including the step of scanning electronic indicia printed on a valet ticket, the electronic indicia associating the valet ticket with a unique identifier.

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24 22. The method of claim 16 further including the steps of:
collecting a first digital image of a front left region of the vehicle;
collecting a second digital image of a front right region of the vehicle;
collecting a third digital image of a rear right region of the vehicle; and
collecting a fourth digital image of a rear left region of the vehicle.

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25 23. The method of claim 16 further including the steps of:
verifying a validity of the valet parking data; and
enabling entry of the vehicle into a parking area upon verification of the valet parking data.

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26 24. The method of claim 23 further including the step of verifying a validity of a valet attendant identifier.

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27 25. The method of claim 23 further including the step of verifying a validity of a valet ticket identifier.

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28 26. The method of claim 16 further including the steps of generating a next vehicle retrieval request.

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29 21. The method of claim ~~26~~ further including the step of receiving an acceptance of the request from the valet attendant.

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30 ~~28~~. The method of claim ~~26~~ further including the steps of receiving a denial of the request from the valet attendant.

29. A computerized valet parking system comprising:

a first kiosk for collecting a first set of valet parking data from a first valet attendant;

a first digital camera array for collecting pre-parking digital images of a vehicle at an entrance location of a parking area; and

a network server for linking the pre-parking digital images to the first set of valet parking data.

sub. A1

30. The parking system of claim 29 wherein the first digital camera array includes:

a first pre-parking camera focused on a front left region of the vehicle for generating a first pre-parking digital image;

a second pre-parking camera focused on a front right region of the vehicle for generating a second pre-parking digital image;

a third pre-parking camera focused on a rear right region of the vehicle for generating a third pre-parking digital image; and

a fourth pre-parking camera focused on a rear left region of the vehicle for generating a fourth pre-parking digital image.

31. The parking system of claim 29 further including:

a second kiosk for collecting a second set of valet parking data from a second valet attendant;

a second digital camera array for collecting post-parking digital images of the vehicle at an exit location of the parking area; and

said network server further linking the post-parking images and the second set of valet parking data to the pre-parking images and the first set of valet parking data.

33 32. The parking system of claim 21 wherein the second digital camera array includes:

a first post-parking camera focused on a front left region of the vehicle for generating a first post-parking digital image;

a second post-parking camera focused on a front right region of the vehicle for generating a second post-parking digital image;

a third post-parking camera focused on a rear right region of the vehicle for generating a third post-parking digital image; and

a fourth post-parking camera focused on a rear left region of the vehicle for generating a fourth post-parking digital image.

Sub. a2 33. The parking system of claim 29 wherein the first kiosk generates next vehicle retrieval requests.

34. A computerized valet parking system comprising:

- a first kiosk for collecting a first set of valet parking data from a first valet attendant;
- a first pre-parking camera focused on a front left region of a vehicle for generating a first pre-parking digital image;
- a second pre-parking camera focused on a front right region of the vehicle for generating a second pre-parking digital image;
- a third pre-parking camera focused on a rear right region of the vehicle for generating a third pre-parking digital image;
- a fourth pre-parking camera focused on a rear left region of the vehicle for generating a fourth pre-parking digital image;
- a second kiosk for collecting a second set of valet parking data from a second valet attendant;
- a first post-parking camera focused on a front left region of the vehicle for generating a first post-parking digital image;
- a second post-parking camera focused on a front right region of the vehicle for generating a second post-parking digital image;
- a third post-parking camera focused on a rear right region of the vehicle for generating a third post-parking digital image;
- a fourth post-parking camera focused on a rear left region of the vehicle for generating a fourth post-parking digital image; and
- a network server for linking the digital images and the valet parking data together.

2 35. The parking system of claim 34 further including:

an entrance system disposed at the entrance location, the entrance system enabling entry of the vehicle into the parking area upon verification of the first set of valet parking data; and
an exit system disposed at the exit location, the exit system enabling exit of the vehicle from the parking area upon verification of the second set of valet parking data.